Aimée, Jaguar and Gender Melancholia

Aimée, Jaguar and Gender Melancholia

(Studies in European Cinema)

Aimée & Jaguar is the true love story between an Aryan wife and mother of four and an underground Jewish lesbian, which begins in 1940s war-torn Berlin while the former's National Socialist soldier husband is away at the front. It has been recounted in various forms since its rediscovery and the variety of output demonstrates the scope of interest in the story: from a BBC documentary film, *Love Story: Berlin 1942* (Clay 1997) to exhibitions at the Jewish Museum, Berlin. Journalist and author Erica Fischer wrote a biographical novel (1994) narrating Felice's life and went on to compile a picture book featuring copies of the documents and photographs exhibited at the Jewish Museum (Fischer and Becker-Rau 2002). Both word restraints and direction preclude an examination of several texts in this article so the focus will be on how the representation of melancholia, in various forms, has been transformed from Fischer's novel for the big screen: Max Färberböck's 1999 narrative film *Aimée & Jaguar: Eine Liebe größer als der Tod/ Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Larger than Death.*

Aimée & Jaguar: Eine Liebesgeschichte, Berlin 1943/ Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943 (Fischer 1994), a bestseller translated from the original German into thirteen languages, focuses primarily on the Jewish background to the story. In order to reconstruct the life of 21-year-old Felice Schragenheim, a Jew who perished under the National Socialist regime, the book uses documents, photographs and letters and draws together several voices in the narrative, including testimony from those who knew Felice. Each chapter details the historical changes to the status of Jews between 1942 and 1945 alongside events from Felice's life, including her love affair with 29-year-old Lilly. Where director Färberböck's main focus is the lesbian love affair, almost a third of Fischer's book recounts Lilly's life after Felice's deportation including her suicide attempts, desertion of lesbianism and second marriage, of convenience, to Willi Beimling, as well as both her and her son's post-war assumption of a Jewish identity. The book's multi-voiced narrative contrasts starkly with the filmic version of Lilly and Felice's story, a hyperbolic 'love larger than death', which shifts the emphasis from the time and place of real-life events, 'Berlin, 1943', to what critic Muriel Cormican describes as 'an insulated larger than life love affair' (2003: 113). Both texts' titles, however, focus on the relationship via the use of the lovers' pet names for each other, the eponymous Aimée and Jaguar rather than the protagonists' real names, Lilly and Felice.

The lesbian love, which is at odds with Jewish survival, is certainly the central theme of the film. Despite recounting a combination of Lilly's (Julia Köhler/Inge Keller) memories

and Felice's (Maria Schrader) life experiences, with alternating focalisation through both female leads, the film is voiced over rather judgmentally by the third main figure, Ilse Ploog (Johanna Wokalek/Kyra Mladeck), a character based on Inge Wolf, one of Felice's lovers and Lilly's domestic help with whom she repeatedly sends her four children out so she can pursue affairs in her home while her husband is away at the front. Ilse is an amalgamation of several people contained in the book; the story she begins to tell in voice-over form before the filmic dialogue begins, contains information taken from multiple testimonies, giving the impression that memory is not pluralistic and multiple, unlike Fischer's text which maintains a tension between Lilly's account of events and those of other people. This streamlining of characters and memories changes how the story is recounted, particularly the modality and focus upon melancholia, for which Ilse acts as a trigger.

The film's main body, told in flashback, opens with Jewish lesbian Felice on a date with Ilse at a Beethoven concert Lilly is also attending. Ilse points out her boss to Felice, who murmurs 'pretty, very pretty' as she becomes increasingly transfixed. Using Lilly's lost spectacles as a means of approach, Felice sets about conquering Lilly with love letters and romantic gestures. Lilly eventually falls for Felice after becoming part of her and Ilse's friendship group, a mixture of lesbian, hetero- and bisexual women, Jewish and Aryan, whose cosmopolitan sophistication is far removed from the life Lilly has known as a housewife and mother. Their love story deepens and Felice renames Lilly 'Aimée' (Beloved) to her 'Jaguar'.

Throughout the film, Felice must silently deal with the loss of loved ones and her fear of capture. It is only after Lilly erupts with anger over Felice's absence, for she frequently goes missing, that the latter confesses her Jewish status. Both Lilly and her parents are accepting of Felice but she and her friends soon decide to use false documents to flee Germany. At the last minute, Felice declares her will to remain in Berlin, where she will be arrested and sent to Theresienstadt concentration camp. White lettering on a black screen at the end speculates about the cause of death, possibly during one of the notorious death marches. The main body, told in flashback, is bookended between glimpses of Lilly's life in the 'present day' of late 1990s Berlin.

The film, a mainstream Hollywood-style costume drama, is more reminiscent of the gender play and sexual freedom that Weimar Berlin has become famous for than truly representative of the capital city under National Socialist rule in the midst of war.[i] Further anachronistic elements of theatre director Färberböck's first feature film include playing on 'lesbian chic', which is in keeping with the portrayal of lesbianism within popular culture in the 1990s (Hamer and Budge 1994: 4). Two heteronormatively-attractive women are intimate

in what Stuart Taberner calls a 'distinctly 90s German film, incorporating the decade's marketing of a stylish homosexuality and recourse to Hollywood techniques' (2005: 362). Despite the film's recalling of Weimar decadence and sometime omission of political and historical reality, it is certainly a cultural product of its time, located in the German memory debates of the 1990s. Lesbian chic, coupled with what Jack Zipes describes as a post-Unification 'fascination for things Jewish' (1994: 15), ensures the film's appeal is two-fold via the sometimes conflicting Jewish and lesbian elements. Stories of Jews under National Socialist rule are extremely popular with viewers in Germany and beyond and the lesbianism not only provides a new angle to the oft-recounted tale of German-Jewish love, but offers a great deal of titillation while also recuperating lesbian history.

Aimée & Jaguar is, therefore, a prime example of heritage cinema.[ii] Lutz Koepnick explores *Aimée & Jaguar* and several other films in his work on heritage cinema, in which he discusses the notion of the 'museal gaze', which transforms the past into an object of consumption (2002: 55). This museal gaze also invokes memory, preservation and a sense of loss, themes which echo the subject of this article: melancholia. Koepnick specifically investigates and refers to *German* heritage cinema. During the second half of the 1990s, German filmmakers explored both the history of Jews in twentieth-century Germany and the Nazi past 'as a crucible of melodramatic intensities' (Koepnick 2002: 49). German heritage film is tied to the rediscovery of German movies as marketable products, the resurgence of Jewish culture as a 'minor culture', the rise of Holocaust commemoration and the disappearance of the 'organic' memory of the Holocaust. Organic memory is somewhat included in Fischer's book via the reproduction of Felice's letters and poetry, parts of which also feature briefly in the film. In Alison Landsberg's terms, the film is 'prosthetic' memory (1996), a type of memory which was later deemed a 'simulacrum' by Koepnick (2002: 73). Prosthetic memory is transmitted via culture, including film, to future generations. Another form of prosthetic memory, photography is used as both a theme and an aesthetic structure within the film, contributing to the often melancholic feel of the *mise-en-scène*.

Melancholia has been discussed in much secondary literature by critics of both the book and the film (including Davidson 2002; Parkinson 2001), although there have been some significant omissions when using it as a lens through which to examine the character of Lilly. *Aimée & Jaguar* has been read both literally, where Lilly's loss of Felice results in her becoming a melancholic in the traditional Freudian sense, and metaphorically, where the film is considered emblematic of a wider German loss based on the theory of Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich, as outlined shortly. I argue, however, that *Aimée & Jaguar* is also

illustrative of a differently constructed subjectivity, one which does not map onto either of the aforementioned tendencies. Where the lesbianism may simultaneously be used to put a new spin on an old tale, titilate the audience, and provide a positive counter-narrative to the melancholic aspects of the plot, this article will investigate further complexities created by the sexuality of the characters. I begin with an examination of the practice of *femme*inisation, before going on to investigate how melancholia may be theorised in relation to the femme and whether femme subjectivity may escape the homophobia and pathologisation associated with such theory. I conclude by pulling back from theoretical interjections to consider the lived reality of the femme in post-war Germany.

*FEMME*INISATION

The film demonstrates a sexualised and *femme*inisied account of lesbian love, although the femme is said to figure as a visual impossibility as a feminine woman onscreen is recoupable to the voyeuristic male gaze. The term femme, taken from the French for woman, was first used in the lesbian context in 1940s US bar culture to describe a feminine woman who desires other (usually masculine) women and is still in use today, in both the English and German languages and beyond. *Femme*inisation is a means of rendering lesbianism more acceptable to a mainstream audience by making queer women fit accepted heteronormative codes of female desirability, thus turning them femme, which may simultaneously heighten objectification and sexualisation. Andrea Weiss argues that the onscreen femme lacks the lesbian verisimilitude which would enable her to be read as a lesbian (1992: 106). Clare Whatling, in her monograph on lesbian spectator viewing strategies, agrees with Weiss and notes that two femmes onscreen only compound the effect (1997: 69), before arguing for the presence of 'femme*ininity', rather than femininity (1997: 69), a blended word from which I have created *femme*inisation. Femme*ininity is, according to Whatling, deployed as a specific viewing strategy so that femininity, 'always and only subjected to a passive and eroticising objectification', may 'in the accession to femme*ininity, fight back' (1997: 69). When femme subjectivity and personal investment comes into play, it cannot be denied that my reading of the film is inspired by my femme subject position. Where binary logic dictates that femininity equals passive objectification, my role as a passive member of the cinematic audience, albeit one who is actively gazing, is somewhat countered by my will to illuminate how femme subjectivity may destabilise a potentially homophobic diagnosis of melancholia.

Within the following analysis, then, I wish to go against orthodoxy and read a theoretical subtext to the film, arguing that Lilly's gender display and femme status may

challenge previous readings of her as a melancholic, while using this reading to question Judith Butler's theory of gender melancholia. This not only provides a new interpretation of the film, but also highlights problems with Butler's theory that have remained unquestioned until now. My analysis of the film involves different metaphorical levels: as a heteronormative (femme) lesbian film and as a text very much located in cultural debates of the 1990s. The focus on lesbian desire and femme subjectivity complicates previous analyses of *Aimée & Jaguar* and illuminates how the notion of melancholia poses an even more complex problem than scholars have thus far acknowledged. Not all readings of the film are necessarily compatible, although all previous secondary literature drawing upon melancholia functions in terms of melancholic loss. The introduction of Butler's theory of gender melancholia offers a less tragic, therefore unconventional new reading of the film based on the notion that femininity does not equal loss but rather addition, artifice, excess and so on.

The lesbianism is, however, certainly not unproblematic for the rather masculine/androgynous Felice is rendered feminine in the film, aside from two occasions when she sports overtly masculine clothing: a Weimar-inspired tuxedo for Lilly's birthday celebration and a bow tie donned, and readjusted to sit perfectly, to have her picture taken during a leisurely day spent with Lilly by the Havel river, immediately before her arrest. On both occasions the male clothing is juxtaposed with a fully made-up face and the resulting mixture of gender signifiers is not only reminiscent of the Dietrich-esque woman in male attire, but it is also rather queer and thus in keeping with this as a lesbian film of the 1990s, a decade which highlighted queerness both at grass roots level and within the academy. Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity states that gender is not inherent, but rather a repeated performance: a boundless act, which gives the impression that masculinity or femininity is natural, for 'gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed' (1990: 25). Färberböck appears to simultaneously nod to Weimar Germany and Butlerian performativity of the genderqueer 1990s via the juxtaposition of gender signifiers and an attempt to play with props and markers of identity.

Felice's bobbed hair, heavily made-up face and red varnished nails signify an extremely groomed femininity, one which is not only at odds with the real-life Felice's gender presentation, but also several elements of her lifestyle: even when homeless, Felice remains immaculately turned out in the film. Her primary gender display, as an elegantly feminine woman, offers what may be perceived as an unthreatening form of lesbianism and her pristine grooming fits in with heteronormative codes of female desirability. This, along with Lilly's femme appearance, portrays the type of lesbian relationship which may be enjoyed by a

mainstream audience.

That *Aimée & Jaguar* features two feminine characters entering into lesbian relations means it is important to investigate Lilly's melancholia from the perspective of gender and sexuality and not just because of her loss of Felice, although this is not to downplay her Judaism or the tragedy of her demise. The primary focus on lesbianism, rather than Judaism, has been denounced, most notably by Jewish author Esther Dischereit in her scathing critique of the film (2001). When we consider the film's foregrounding of gender and sexuality via the *femme*inine take on Mulveyan 'to-be-looked-at-ness' and displays of femme-on-femme lesbian sex, alongside the fact that previous readings of the film have focused on other forms of melancholia, Färberböck's *Aimée & Jaguar* really should be considered in terms of Butlerian gender melancholia: a theory which incorporates both an analysis of the gendering of the hetero- and homosexual subject and Freudian melancholia.[iii]

MELANCHOLIA

First used critically by Sigmund Freud, the term melancholia describes a collection of symptoms which occur in someone who has lost a love object. The object may be an actual person or some abstraction which has become an object of love, such as a homeland or an ideal. While the mourning person faces an impoverished and empty world, the melancholic experiences an impoverished and empty I, not knowing what makes him or her sad and unable to mourn because the loss is accompanied by a major disappointment that can have anger or even hatred at its roots (Freud 1957: 244). This means that mourning results in a separation from the love object and melancholia, conversely, involves the incorporation of the lost object into the self.

Picking up and transforming the term, psychoanalysts Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich built upon Freud's notion that the loss of an abstract ideal may cause a state of melancholia, arguing that the nation of West Germany was melancholic after the Second World War. Because West Germans were not allowed to mourn the loss of Hitler and the National Socialist regime, the Mitscherlichs reasoned, Freudian melancholia could be used to explain the collective guilt and feeling of victimhood, regardless of who the real perpetrators and victims of the Holocaust were (1967).

Judith Butler's theory, from a gendered perspective, of Freudian melancholia can be applied to *Aimée & Jaguar* to illuminate a story which has been read using the two aforementioned theories of melancholia. Butler argues that gender is the play between psyche and appearance and states that if melancholia is, in Freud's terms, the effect of an ungrieved

loss then the performativity of gender may be an acting out related to the problem of the unacknowledged loss of the Other. Confusions may arise due to Butler's use of the drag performance as exemplification of this point within *Bodies that Matter* (1993): Butler states that drag allegorises heterosexual melancholy, where a gender is formed out of the refusal to grieve that gender as a possible love object. In her argument, the 'truest' lesbian melancholic is the 'strictly straight woman', just as the 'strictly straight man' is the 'truest' gay melancholic. Thus the heterosexual woman becomes feminine in order to incorporate the woman whose love she must disavow. Similarly, the masculinity of the heterosexual male is a result of the disavowal of a homosexual relationship with another man. The straight man and woman, therefore, become the respective man and woman for whom they never grieved (Butler 1993: 234-6).

Butler's line of thought, however, does not account for the lesbian femme body so the notion of gender melancholia is problematised by Lilly's distinctly femme sexuality. If those who are strictly heterosexual grieve the disavowal of a homosexual object choice then both Lilly's femme subjectivity and her desire, which could be read as bisexual via her screened desire for both sexes, complicate readings of the melancholia in the film thus far. Furthermore, the *femme*inisation of the characters in the film makes previous readings of the film problematic if Butler is suggesting that homosexual desire may not be melancholic. The femme creates more of a dilemma here than any other lesbian subject; she loves the female object she is supposed to disavow, yet she expresses femininity nonetheless. The notion of gender melancholia allows for a more upbeat re-reading of the film, although such positivity is certainly controversial when considering a film about a Jew who perishes under Hitler.

Aimée & Jaguar opens with an octogenarian Lilly Wust waiting to be moved out of her apartment before her love story is told in flashback form, a style which heightens the melancholic feel by reducing most of the narrative to nothing more than a memory. During the opening credits, the camera pans a room filled with packed boxes and crosses over a pile of Lilly's photographs, hinting once again at memory and melancholia. The melancholic feel is heightened when we see through the window of her apartment that Berlin is undergoing building work, which may create a sense of loss via the substitution of old with new. That the 'present day' of the film is set in 1990s Berlin is also significant with regard to melancholia, for it is a decade which saw the end of both the state of East Germany and the communist regime, as well as the subsequent establishment of 'Ostalgie'.[iv] Frau Wust is visibly sad about the move, against her will, out of her apartment and into the regulated, communal lifestyle of a nursing home. This sense of loss is further compounded as we will later discover that is the

apartment she had shared with Felice.

There is, however, another reading of the film's opening which juxtaposes positive lesbian desire, and the lesbian is not melancholic according to Butler, with the aforementioned sense of loss. Indeed, lesbianism certainly creates some of the most happy and humorous moments throughout the film. Immediately after the opening titles described above, Frau Wust is being moved out of her Berlin apartment by an attractive young blonde, an event absent in Fischer's book. Frau Wust stands on the pavement, cigarette in hand, watching the helper pack her possessions into the car. Smoking once signified lesbian desire onscreen, due to the supposed masculinity of the act, but within this film it has been read as a sign of Lilly's usurpation of her lost love, Felice (Sieg 2002). Frau Wust steps forward, raising her eyebrows and opening her eyes very wide, before the camera shifts to her point of view and we see that the young woman's short skirt has risen provocatively high while leaning over to stow a suitcase into the backseat of the car. The film then cuts nearly 180° to a low angle shot of the staring Frau Wust as she dryly comments 'pretty little skirt', while looking almost straight into the camera, which is positioned where the skirt would be. When the young woman asks Frau Wust if she would like a 'last look?', the ambiguity of the woman's elided question, for she has not stipulated that it is a last look at the apartment, coupled with Frau Wust's sexualised look at her, provides a rather humorous double entendre, of which the young woman is unaware.

This is not reducing lesbian desire to comedy, although comedy could be viewed positively both in relation to melancholia and if used as a way of subverting the male heterosexual eroticisation of lesbian desire. Indeed feminists have frequently used humour as a strategy to empower women. In this case, it appears that the humour is created by (lesbian) desire in a woman so elderly that many viewers may suppose that she no longer desires sexually at all. The obviously large age gap, coupled with the lesbianism, renders the representation of desire queer in a way that the youthful Lilly's desire is not. A look such as that given by Frau Wust to the young woman's legs and posterior, accompanied by the comment about her skirt, could be seen as a means of expressing sarcastic disapproval about her attire, if taken out of the context of the lesbian film. While showing the extremely different accepted modes of femininity available to two distinct age groups, the scene is a humorous way to counteract the notion that the elderly no longer desire sexually and certainly not homosexually. This, as well as the young woman's oblivion to the situation, helps to create the humour and eases the viewer into the lesbian desire of the filmic narrative, for our introduction to Lilly's lesbianism is not via an eroticised look between two young, attractive

women whose desire is reciprocated and who could easily be used to arouse viewers, for feminine 'girl-on-girl' sex is a staple of heterosexual pornography.

The various possible melancholic readings available, coupled with femme desire for another feminine woman, certainly complicate this sequence. The lesbian desire is being demonstrated by a feminine woman, albeit elderly, which raises questions regarding gender melancholia and may appear to contradict Butler's theory. The femme does not need to be melancholic as she loves and may openly desire women while simultaneously opting for a feminine appearance, aesthetics which go against the grain of the lesbian stereotype, for homosexuality is traditionally linked to gender 'inversion'. Age must be brought back into the equation here for femininity is tied to beauty and, by association, youth. The moving-out scene is rendered less tragic by lesbianism, both on a visual level via Lilly's wandering eyes and deadpan humour, and theoretically, due to the possible negation of melancholia which Butler's theory suggests and the subsequent problems which the female protagonists create in relation to gender melancholia.

Although her desiring look at the young woman may suggest otherwise, Lilly is not actively lesbian at this point. The film portrays her as a woman who has not indulged in sexual relations with anyone after her lover's death over fifty years previously and even though Fischer's book informs us that Lilly married a man for financial and social reasons after Felice died, Lilly (in real life, book, and film) completely avoided sexual and romantic relations with other women. Taking Lilly's potential bisexuality into account further complicates Butler's theory, for Butler pays no attention to the bisexual within her notion of gender melancholia, possibly because the bisexual offers neither a surface nor a sexuality which fit in with her theory. Where, for Butler, the heterosexual incorporates the object he or she is not allowed to love, and because the homosexual loves that object so s/he does not undergo melancholic incorporation, there is no place for the bisexual who may take a homo- or a heterosexual love object. Such a reading of Fischer's book could be said to negate the idea of Lilly as femme and further encourage a melancholic reading of her, but the film's aesthetics and primary focus on a femme-femme relationship, alongside Lilly's notion of her one true/lost love, render this more complex and mean readings of Lilly's desire must be explored further.

AESTHETIC DOUBLING

Although the filmic plot opens with Lilly losing her home and being forced into a new abode, accompanied by a melancholic *mise-en-scène*, Färberböck waits until the end to overtly

portray Lilly's melancholia about her lost love. This stands in contrast to the way the book thoroughly details Lilly's melancholia and subsequent incorporation of Judaism into her life as a means of dealing with Felice's absence. The film does, nonetheless, hint at melancholia throughout, frequently relying on visual doubling effects between the two protagonists. As the women are seated side by side on a tram, travelling incognito after Lilly's trip to a hair and beauty salon to prepare for the New Year's Eve party she will host at her home, we see that Lilly's curls are much more pronounced than the looser waves she had sported in all previous scenes, rendering her new hairstyle a blonde version of Felice's stereotypically dark Jewish curls. Likewise, her significantly darker eye make-up and stained lips echo onscreen Felice's typical use of cosmetics: bold, smoky eyes and a blood red mouth. As they sit together, the women are doubled and the dark/light mirroring offers an effect similar to that of a photographic negative, an original from which the photographic copy is made. Such a notion allows us to pick up Butlerian gender performativity, which explicitly states that gender is not a copy of an original but a copy of a copy or a copy of the notion of an original. Pre-digital photography, shown in the film, often saw the photographic negative ('original') discarded after the photograph (copy) was produced, and Lilly's slow incorporation of Felice's style and habits may make the viewer wonder what is to become of Felice.

Where Felice's dark, pronounced make up once contrasted with Lilly's nude cosmetics and stereotypically 'Aryan' face, their New Year's Eve party, the reason for Lilly's trip to the salon, draws further attention to Lilly's red lipstick and visible make up, highlighting how much more aesthetically similar to Felice she is becoming as the two women reach greater emotional proximity. At this point, Felice is actively pursuing Lilly, who also begins to want Felice sexually, regardless of whether or not she admires Felice and also wants to be physically and behaviourally like her. Felice's role in the onscreen doubling of both women must be acknowledged, for it is Felice who grooms Lilly; she gives Lilly her own clothes and Lilly's aforementioned trip to the salon is a surprise gift from Felice, who repeatedly encourages Lilly's aesthetic changes. Felice helping Lilly to alter her appearance onscreen further complicates the notion of melancholia. *Femme*ininity is significant here, for other accounts of Felice indicate that she was neither femme nor feminine, but favoured more masculine clothing and activities. Because Felice has been significantly *femme*inised for the film, it is actually her gender display which has become more like that of feminine Lilly.

Doubling will occur again as the women make love for the first time, offering up a light/dark mirror image as they face each other in bed, although their skin appears to blend into one, rubbishing the notion that there are essential and physical differences between Jews

and Aryans. After Lilly leaves her husband for Felice, we witness such obvious doubling once more as Felice and Lilly's appearance, laughter and kisses mirror each other in the joyful scene. Later in the film, after Felice has finally confessed her Jewish status to Lilly, the pair disclose both their relationship and Felice's religious background to Lilly's parents, in a scene which once again reinforces their unity via their aesthetic doubling of make-up, hair and clothing styles. Immediately after this, we see the two women entwined and, aside from the difference in hair colour, there is no visible distinction between them, despite both being naked, thus lacking the props and clothing which had previously created the visual differences that slowly turned into similarities. It becomes clear that the doubling of the protagonists occurs primarily at significant bonding moments throughout the film, that this doubling is usually not initiated by Lilly, and that such doubling even occurs when both women are nude and Lilly is without the props, such as cigarettes, which have been key in previous arguments about her supposed usurpation of Felice. When read alongside the instances of gender drag and ethnic dressing up which take place and taking the production and release dates of the film into consideration, for the 1990s was a decade of huge significance for both memory debates and queerness, this may be considered a broader statement about notions of essentialism, copy and original.

The film's famous drag dress-up scene, in which Lilly opts for Felice's suit rather than her usual dresses and we see Felice donning Lilly's clothes, commences with Lilly wearing dark masculine attire and smoking a cigarette. She looks in a mirror and adjusts her bow tie, an item borrowed from Felice which she will go on to wear for the aforementioned outing to the Havel river and identical to that worn by the latter in a real-life photograph featured in Fischer's book. The cigarette in her mouth, also Felice's, causes Lilly to cough. As the camera pans out, we see that this is not an instance of Lilly usurping Felice, for Lilly is engaging in gender drag alongside her female lover. The camera moves to Felice's heeled feet as she pulls up a dress, which we assume belongs to Lilly, before Lilly grabs her and takes the traditionally masculine lead role in their dance, the role which is taken by a top hat and tail-wearing Felice during Lilly's birthday party earlier in the film. At this moment the dress Felice is wearing falls to the floor. The dress-up scene can be read as a visual demonstration of how Butler's gender melancholia does not work for those who desire homosexually as the women try, and fail, to incorporate each other's gender identity, that which Felice and Lilly displayed in real-life, and there is a distinct lack of loss, sadness or melancholia as both protagonists laugh, emphasising that the purpose of this scene is entertainment and humour, for the protagonists and the audience, via gender role-play.

The aforementioned scene and other moments of doubling have been read in a more negative way. Anna Parkinson gives an overview of both the book and the film, before criticising the merging of 'markers of identity' (2001: 143), which results in a failure to analyse the link between what she argues is Lilly's anti-Semitism turned philo-Semitism (2001: 160), although I propose that her notion of transformation could be applied to sexuality, not just religion. In her article, Parkinson rightly disputes the 'reductive psycho-analytical understanding of lesbianism' deployed (2001: 158), although she goes on to read the film as a case of lesbian narcissism.

LESBIAN NARCISSISM

I do not read the film as a portrayal of narcissistic lesbianism, although Lilly 'becoming' aesthetically more like Felice could be said to compound her melancholia in the Freudian sense, while simultaneously pointing to homophobic Freudian narcissism.[v] Here, a distinction must be made between Freudian melancholia and the way it has subsequently been reinterpreted, specifically by Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich. Melancholia is only homophobic if Freud's now widely disputed view of homosexuality is accepted. Contrastingly, for Butler, melancholia is normal for heterosexuality, where the lost love object is incorporated, but is not a feature of homosexuality. This renders the onscreen doubling of the two women problematic: during the instances when Lilly supposedly 'becomes' aesthetically more like Felice, she is indulging in a homosexual affair and thus has neither the need to incorporate Felice melancholically, nor the inability to mourn a lost love object because Felice is still alive as the doubling occurs. Lilly actively chooses to love Felice, even leaving her husband to be with her lesbian lover, so there is certainly no heterosexual disavowal of homosexual love in the film.

Screen studies have given rise to what Teresa de Lauretis claims is woman's putative inability to differentiate between wanting another woman and wanting to be her, where lesbian desire is represented as 'intrafeminine fascinations' in Hollywood-style cinema (1994: 116). Katrin Sieg, whose article about *Aimée & Jaguar* includes the unfortunate implication that lesbian desire resulted from a lack of heterosexual opportunity when there were fewer men around in wartime (2002: 318), describes how the slippage de Lauretis refers to has also produced a pathological variant of representing female relationships through the figure of the sinister female copycat, where 'the copycat's crush, revealed as a longing to become the other, leads her to take her love object's place by sometimes violent means' and she goes on to argue that naïve Lilly's admiration for sophisticated Felice supports this homophobic representation

of lesbianism (2002: 312).[vi] Although Sieg is right to mention the possibility of this rather Freudian narcissistic reading of lesbianism onscreen, Lilly's doubling of Felice is much more pronounced in Fischer's book and, as various testimonies in the book and other sources make clear, also in real life than in the film. The onscreen doubling is an aesthetic device that may signpost a sense of melancholia while simultaneously titillating viewers and/or playing with the notion of a copy and an original. If Lilly were just a 'copycat' then the aforementioned lesbian narcissism could be an issue, but Lilly is neither a 'copycat' nor a 'stalker'; she was a married woman indulging in extra-marital relations with men when actively pursued by lesbian Felice before the pair entered into a loving and mutual relationship.

Robert J. Corber argues that the passing lesbian's seduction of the heterosexual woman is grounded in the homoerotic relations of looking that are central to female spectatorship (2005: 10).[vii] Jackie Stacey claims that narcissistic identification and homoerotic desire are conflated within the female spectator (1987, 1994), an idea which de Lauretis refutes (1991, 1994), stating that Freud conceived of object libido involving 'desire, wanting to have' the object, which contrasts with the 'desexualized' ego libido that is related to 'narcissistic identification, wanting to be or be like seeing oneself' as the object (1994: 118). For de Lauretis, following Freud, the two cannot be combined, while Stacey insists that this dichotomy ignores the fact that 'narcissism is not just love of self, but always involves an image of another' (1994: 30). Stacey maintains that rather than confusing identification and desire, she is arguing for the eroticisation of identification: not saying they are the same, but that 'female identification contains forms of desire which include, though not exclusively, homoerotic pleasure' (Stacey 1994: 29). Here Stacey rightly argues that identification can be eroticised, and such a reading would change how the film's melancholia has been perceived thus far, while somewhat salvaging Lilly from the (plentiful) critiques of her in both witness testimony and academic literature. It allows Lilly to be read as erotically identifying with Felice, rather than melancholically usurping aesthetic and behavioural aspects of her, even though her lesbianism supposedly forecloses this possibility. Conversely, Felice can be viewed as erotically identifying with Lilly and encouraging an aesthetic likeness as it is Felice who sets about transforming Lilly, both visually and in terms of sexuality.

I maintain, however, that discussions of narcissism coupled with homosexual desire remain problematic, due to Freud's homophobic conflation of these and the way narcissism can be used to de-sexualise lesbianism. Rather than demonstrating a narcissistic view of lesbianism onscreen, Lilly's gradual visual similarity to Felice is perhaps a means of toying with dyads including active-passive (including the cinematic male gaze), original-copy,

Aryan-Jewish and so on, although the constraints of this article preclude an in-depth exploration of this.

LOSS

Despite the multitude of ways that lesbian theory can confuse, queer and play with previous readings of *Aimée & Jaguar*, it cannot be denied that the film examines traumatic loss and does demonstrate a melancholic fixation towards the end. In order to further dramatise the 'love larger than death', Färberböck fails to mention Lilly's second marriage, which is recounted in Fischer's text as brief, unsuccessful, and of convenience, so the film gives the impression that Lilly spent her life obsessing about Felice. The main body is told in flashback form but returns to the 'present' of Berlin in the late 1990s towards the end, in a scene which takes place less than a few hours, in narrative time, after the opening sequence previously recounted. Thanks to the magic of film, Lilly immediately reencounters Ilse in the retirement home and this meeting triggers the story of their past with Felice while simultaneously demonstrating Lilly's melancholia in what appears to be the Freudian sense, when we return to their conversation after the long filmic flashback to the 1940s. Referring to Felice, Lilly states 'I only thought about her [...]. Fifty years, Ilse. Fifty years and one thought. One face. One name.' Because Lilly spent so long waiting for Felice to return, clinging to the hope that she was still alive, there was no clear point at which mourning could commence and no demarcation between the enforced end of their relationship and Felice's death. Where 'to be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event' (Caruth 2003: 193), Ilse and Lilly's onscreen meeting after more than half a century acts as a trigger for Lilly's thoughts about the trauma of losing Felice and a means of finally voicing a distinct melancholia.

This obvious shift in the presentation of Lilly has been employed by critics, including Sieg (2003), to argue that the protagonists' doubling throughout the film (the kindest expression of this refers to Lilly as somewhat naïvely aping Felice) is an aesthetic device to show the build up to her eventual usurpation of Felice's identity. This proves problematic, for Lilly was able to love Felice homosexually and this homosexuality forecloses incorporation of the same-sex love object into the subject's gendered presentation, according to Butler. Certain props which are said to signify melancholia within the film, such as the cigarette and the photographic camera, are also used to either connote lesbianism or to disguise this when passing is required. Photography, a skill Lilly learns from Felice, is a visual euphemism representing the ability to see and to desire differently. The photographic act produces the aforementioned prosthetic memory, conflating the homosexual desire Butler argued was not

melancholic, with a form of memory which could act as a trigger for melancholia: a photograph. Although the meeting with bisexual Ilse prompts Lilly's talk of her lost love, photographs are employed to juxtapose the happiness of Lilly's past with her one true love, Felice with the emptiness of her solitary life in the late 1990s, a decade associated with endings and new beginnings in German politics and culture.

It is at this point that we must acknowledge the fact that melancholia relating to sexuality and a resulting gender display, a varying constellation of the psychic, physical and performative, can be separated temporally from the melancholia relating to a significant traumatic loss. Butler's theory of melancholia is about a loss of possibilities, something which will not happen in the future and which also has no past or present, whereas the Freudian melancholia Lilly experiences is related to a lost love, a solid event in the past which dominates her present.

Despite Lilly's failed attempt at smoking during the 'drag' scene, in which Lilly and Felice dress up in each other's clothes, the elderly Frau Wust is a competent and frequent smoker in the film's present and both the opening and second-to-closing sequences feature her smoking. This has been read as Lilly's adoption of Felice's smoking habit which, in turn, becomes a visual cipher for the former's incorporation of her lover. Towards the end of the film, Lilly tells Ilse how she went to the Theresienstadt concentration camp, where Felice was being held, in an attempt to see her. Ilse is horrified and as she scolds Lilly for endangering Felice's life, Lilly lights a cigarette and shows no sign of remorse. Sieg claims that this hints at a visual displacement of Felice (2003: 312) and here I concur with Sieg because Lilly has now made her melancholia extremely clear. Lilly does not accept any form of blame for Felice's demise and Ilse must indicate that Lilly's anger is misplaced for it is directed initially at the *Führer* and then at destiny, in keeping with Freud's theory that melancholia turns into self-destructive hate that is meant to target someone or something else (1957: 244). Despite the potential of Butlerian gender melancholia to provide a more upbeat reading of the film throughout, we cannot deny that Lilly is certainly portrayed as a melancholic in the traditional Freudian sense at the very end.

Furthermore, the film's ending gives the impression that Lilly was perhaps neither lesbian nor bisexual, but a woman who had a one-off 'love larger than death', unlike the book which narrates her attraction to women before she met Felice, as far back as her school days, and her life with her second husband after Felice is arrested. Such a conclusion would certainly justify Butler's theory of gender melancholia if Lilly were not to be read as femme, as I argue she is, but rather feminine and thus able to be melancholic. The film's ending

confronts the viewer with the possibility that Lilly's sexuality is irrelevant, despite the focus on lesbianism throughout the narrative. As Ilse confesses to having several lovers after Felice's death, referring to herself as a 'little pig' with a grin on her face, Lilly states she had none. Lilly seems unable to differentiate between her feelings for Felice and Felice's victim status at this point, for she conflates her sexuality with melancholia and renders herself more of a victim than her lover who perished.

Dominick LaCapra built on the aforementioned work of Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich, using their theory that the nation of West Germany was melancholic, turning 'indiscriminate generalization of historical trauma into the idea of a wound culture or the notion that everyone is somehow a victim (or, for that matter, a survivor)'. According to LaCapra, the 'founding trauma' for Germans is not the Holocaust but the de-Nazification and displaced sense of victimhood in the post-war generation, when many Germans turned themselves from perpetrators into victims of National Socialism, therefore ridding themselves of guilt and responsibility (2003: 200). Although Lilly welcomed de-Nazification, her displaced sense of victimhood coupled with melancholia after her loss of Felice is recounted in Fischer's biographical novel: she donned Felice's (unworn) Star of David, immediately transforming herself into a victim, aesthetically at least. LaCapra is explicit about the difference between empathy, which is positive, and over-identification: 'it is dubious to identify with the victim to the point of making oneself a surrogate victim who has a right to the victim's voice or subject position' (2003: 200). Lilly views herself as a victim in both the film and the book, but Ilse separates Lilly's melancholia and guilt from the suffering which Felice underwent. 'I think fate betrayed me' states Lilly, to which Ilse replies 'earlier the *Führer*, now fate [...] You betrayed yourself. You'. Parkinson claims that this 'highlight[s] the demarcation between the positions of *Opfer* [victim] and *Täter* [perpetrator] for the first time in the film' (2001: 152).[viii] Returning here to gendered aesthetics, Lilly and Felice do not maintain distinct behaviours and appearances throughout the film so various binary positions are frequently blurred by Felice throughout her life, as well as by Lilly after Felice's death.

Considering this notion of victim and perpetrator, Stuart Taberner's article about philo-Semitism in German film expresses a dislike for how the Holocaust is seen as a crime done to Germans and how Lilly epitomises the 'ordinary German' (2005: 363). Taberner rightly claims that the film seems to, perhaps unintentionally, 'foster the illusion that *Germans* were also victims of Nazi anti-Semitism' (2005: 358), although some nuance is necessary here. Lilly is an indirect victim of anti-Semitism as she loses someone whom she loves deeply. Not going into detail about Lilly's life after Felice's arrest, such as her fixation on

Judaism and how she rebuilt her life after the war when West Germany was (according to the Mitscherlichs) in a state of melancholia, allows the film to be marketed primarily as a dramatic lesbian love story. Taberner politicises the focus on Lilly when Felice is arrested and places the representation of Felice's arrest and Lilly's loss within the context of recent debates about Holocaust commemoration, with its focus on loss. Significantly, however, this appears as a *German* loss as Färberböck invites the viewer to adopt Lilly's perspective: 'in the process the audience's sympathy is perhaps "repatriated" from an uncomfortably uncanny solidarity with Jewish victims to a more "natural" identification with the "ordinary" German' (2005: 365). When the camera zooms in on Lilly as she lies on the floor of her apartment, sobbing and screaming 'no' just after Felice's arrest, viewer sympathy seems to be directed towards her suffering, rather than Felice's. By inviting this identification, melancholia may be turned into a structure of the narrative, where the (German) audience is positioned to perceive Lilly as a victim. However, this is perhaps intended to ensure the story is one of a lesbian love 'larger than death', rather than the Holocaust film it would become if it were focalised through Felice beyond her arrest.

Despite various conflicting readings, it cannot be denied that the aesthetic structure of the film certainly portrays melancholia. The opening credits, referred to earlier, feature the women frolicking outdoors with Lilly's children and filmic action is frozen into photographic stills. This results in the entire episode being framed as photographic memory, thus delivering a melancholic feel; the stationary aspect of photography stands in contrast to the movement of cinematic film which, in mainstream cinema, usually propels the action forward. There is a future within moving cinematic film, while photographs remain frozen in one moment.

Similarly, the end of the film features a flashback of Felice, Lilly and friends playing cards, and the former states her inability to understand how one could endure a life-long monogamous relationship as a song about one true love plays intra-diegetically. Felice, who juggles relationships with Lilly and Ilse throughout the film, proclaims 'I don't want forever! I want now! And now! And now! And now!' highlighting her love of seizing the moment. It is at this point that Lilly, after brief instructions from her lover on how to operate the camera, photographs Felice. I argue against Parkinson's idea that this 'exhibits her understanding of Felice's demand to live in the moment by asking Felice to pose again and again' (2001: 152), for such repeated capturing goes against Felice's will to be free. Lilly pins Felice to a fixed image, which becomes a memory immediately after it has been captured, rather than allowing Felice the perpetual present and freedom of 'now' which Felice craves. Indeed it is this will to live in the moment without dwelling too much on the past, distant and more recent, which

demonstrates that Felice is not melancholic, despite losing close friends and family members under the National Socialist regime. In contrast to Felice's positivity, Lilly keeps Felice frozen and objectified and cannot move on with her own life after her lover's demise. The repetition of 'now' highlights Felice's multiplicity, for 'now' cannot actually be repeated, and contrasts with the preceding scene showing Lilly trapped in a melancholic state for over fifty years.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REALITY

Here, I return to the argument that Lilly is femme as this line of thought can provide some explanation, beyond the level of aesthetics, about the way she is presented in the film. A femme identity may mean that she did not identify as lesbian within the discourses available to her after the war. For example, participation in the lesbian scene of the 1970s, engulfed by the androgynous and exclusionary second-wave feminist movement, would have been rather difficult because feminism rejected the femme's supposedly excessive femininity, an *excess* which I earlier argued could sometimes counter the *loss* of melancholia. This would mean that Lilly's adherence to strictly femme modes of dress and behaviour did not fit into the anti-butch-femme lesbian scene of that time. A lesbian made unwelcome by other lesbians, and offered no opportunities with them for friendship, romance or sexual relations, could well become fixed on the only woman she was allowed to love and be sexually intimate with.

A diagnosis of melancholia within Färberböck's *Aimée & Jaguar* may be complicated by my Butlerian reading of the film, by Felice's onscreen *femme*inisation, and by Lilly's various potential subject positions and sexualities, whether hetero-, homo-, bisexual, or a melancholic fixed on only one love, for the film dramatises the political reality of the story to become 'a love larger than death'. Butlerian gender melancholia offers a more positive reading but leaves no room for subjects such as the biologically female lesbian femme, who does not provide the right combination of sex, gender and sexuality for Butler's theory, which also cannot account for bisexuality, or for the heterosexual who displays male femininity, female masculinity or other forms of genderqueerness. The fact that Butlerian melancholia focuses on the individual's gender display means that this theory does not preclude the possibility that the subject may suffer other types of melancholia relating to different forms of loss. It cannot be denied that Färberböck's *Aimée & Jaguar* displays a melancholic *mise-en-scène*; an editing style which encourages one of the protagonists, Lilly, to be framed as a melancholic; and a plot featuring Lilly's verbal disclosure of what appears to be melancholia in relation to a lost love, Felice, at the very end. Different forms of representation can, thus, point towards or complicate various melancholic readings, such as Färberböck's employment

of doubling effects in his re-telling of the tale, in which two feminine, sexualised protagonists create a striking visual impact.

In contrast to the notion of loss and the interiority of much melancholia, the physicality of femininity offers an aesthetic addition: an excess which may be positive, despite second-wave feminism's cries to the contrary. Although controversial, reading characters who juxtapose a non-'inverted' gender display with a homo-, bi-, or queer sexuality in order to question a diagnosis of melancholia, may not only attempt to destabilise the pathologisation, homophobic and other, of such diagnoses and readings, but also simultaneously illuminates the significance of femininity, homosexuality, and other identity positions traditionally confined to the second part of the binary; those habitually subjugated positions which have relevance both within and beyond the parameters of Germany and its history.

References

Butler, Judith (1993), *Bodies That Matter. On The Discursive Limits Of "Sex"* (London and New York: Routledge).

Butler, Judith (1990), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge).

Corber, Robert J. (2005), 'Cold War Femme: Lesbian Visibility in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *All About Eve*', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 11. Pp. 1-22.

Cormican, Muriel (2003), '*Aimée und Jaguar* and the Banality of Evil', *German Studies Review,* 26.1 . Pp. 105-120.

Davidson, J. E. (2002). 'A Story of Faces and Intimate Spaces: Form and History in Max Färberböck's *Aimée und Jaguar*', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 19:4. 323-341.

de Lauretis, Teresa (1994), *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

— (1991), 'Film and the Visible' in Bad Object Choices (eds.) *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video* (Seattle: Bay Press). Pp. 223-263.

— (1990), 'Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness', *Feminist Studies*, 16. Pp. 115-150.

— (1988), 'Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation', *Theatre* Journal, 40.2. Pp. 155-177.

— (1984), *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

Dischereit, Esther (2001), *Mit Eichmann an der Börse. In jüdischen und anderen Angelegenheiten*, (Berlin: Ullstein).

Fischer, Erica (1994), *Aimée & Jaguar. Eine Liebesgeschichte, Berlin, 1943* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag).

Freud, Sigmund (1957) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* Volume XIV (London: Hogarth).

Hamer, Diane, and Budge, Belinda (eds.) (1994), *The Good, the Bad, and the Gorgeous: Popular Culture's Romance with Lesbianism* (London and San Francisco: Pandora).

Koepnick, Lutz (2002), 'Reframing the Past: Heritage Cinema and the Holocaust in the 1990's', *New German Critique*, 87. Pp. 47-82.

— (2001), 'Redeeming History? Foster's Dome and the Political Aesthetic of the Berlin Republic', *German Studies Review*, 25.2. Pp. 298-303.

LaCapra, Dominick (2003), 'Trauma, Absence, Loss' in Levi, Neil, and Rothberg, Michael (eds.) *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press). Pp. 170-210.

Landsberg, Alison (1997), 'America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory: Toward a Radical Politics of Empathy', *New German Critique*, 71. Pp. 66-81.

— (1996), *Prosthetic Memory: The Logics and Politics of Memory in Modern American Culture*, Ph.D. thesis, The University of Chicago.

Mankiewicz, Joseph L. (1950), *All About Eve,* Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox.

Mitscherlich, Alexander, and Mitscherlich, Margarete (1993), *Erinnerungsarbeit. Zur Psychoanalyse der Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer).

Mulvey, L. (1998). 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' in Merck. M. (ed.) *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* (London and New York: Routledge).

Parkinson, Anna (2001), 'Of Death, Kitsch and Melancholia: *Aimée und Jaguar*: "Eine Liebesgeschichte, Berlin 1943" ór "Eine Liebe größer als der Tod?"' in Schmitz, Helmut (ed.) *German Culture and the Uncomfortable Past: Representations of National Socialism in Contemporary Germanic Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate). Pp. 143-163.

Seidelman, Susan (1985), *Desperately Seeking Susan,* New York: Orion Pictures.

Sieg, Katrin (2002), 'Sexual Desire and Social Transformation in *Aimée und Jaguar*', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28.1. Pp. 303-329.

Stacey, Jackie (2007), *Queer Screen* (London: Routledge).

— (1994), *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge).

— (1991), 'Feminine Fascinations: Forms of Identification in Star-Audience Relations' in Gledhill, Christine (ed.) *Stardom: Industry of Desire* (London: Routledge). Pp. 141-166.

— (1987), 'Desperately Seeking Difference', *Screen*, 18. Pp. 48-61.

Taberner, Stuart (2005), 'Philo-Semitism in Recent German Film: *Aimée und Jaguar, Rosenstraße* and *Das Wunder von Bern*', *German Life and Letters*, 58.3. Pp. 358-373.

Weiss, Andrea (1992), *Vampires and Violets. Lesbians in Film* (New York: Penguin).

Whatling, Clare (1997), *Screen Dreams. Fantasising Lesbians in Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

Zipes, Jack (1994), 'The Contemporary German Fascination for Things Jewish: Toward a Jewish Minority Culture' in Gilman, Sander L, and Remmler, Karen (eds.) *Reemerging Jewish Culture in Germany. Life and Literature since 1989* (New York: New York University Press). Pp. 15-46.

Key words: Jewish representation, lesbian representation, melancholia, narcissism, German cinema, World War Two.

Abstract: 'Aimée, Jaguar and Gender Melancholia' examines Max Färberböck's first feature film, *Aimée & Jaguar: Eine Liebe größer als der Tod/ Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Larger than Death* (1999), to consider various ways the female protagonists subvert and/or encourage a range of melancholic readings (Freud, the Mitscherlichs, Butler). The filmic retelling of the true love story set in 1940s Berlin between an Aryan wife and mother of four and an underground Jewish lesbian, who eventually perishes under the National Socialist regime, displays a melancholic *mise-en-scène*, editing style, and plot via its flashback to the story of one true/lost love. This article examines the traditional understanding of melancholia alongside various ideas relating to screened lesbianism, including *femme*inisation, theories of lesbian narcissism, and Judith Butler's notion of gender melancholia, to offer a more upbeat, albeit controversial, re-reading of the film.

Bio: Dr. Leanne Dawson's research focuses on the representation of minority identities, particularly gender, sexuality and ethnicity in German literature, theatre and film. Articles include 'The *Transe* Femme in Elfriede Jelinek's *Krankheit oder Moderne Frauen*' and her forthcoming monograph is called *Femme: Queer Femininities in German Culture*. She is housed in German Studies at the University of Leeds, where she also supervises and teaches at postgraduate level within three specialist Centres: World Cinemas, Translation Studies, and Interdisciplinary Gender Studies. Alongside her work within the academy, she is interested in disseminating knowledge to audiences beyond, including her funded 'Queer Identities' Impact Project, which uses academic research to create a broader, public understanding of LGBTQ issues.

[i] Indeed, Weimar film includes movies starring bisexual, cross-dressing actress Marlene Dietrich, such as her role as a cabaret artiste Lola-Lola in *Der blaue Engel/ The Blue Angel* (von Sternberg 1930) and the English-language *Morocco* (von Sternberg 1930), which features Dietrich kissing another woman and performing a song dressed in a man's tuxedo, both of which were considered scandalous by audiences at the time while echoing a gender-bending homosexual undercurrent in the nightlife of Weimar Berlin. *Mädchen in Uniform/ Girls in Uniform* (Sagan 1931), also originating from the Weimar Republic, is famously the first ever feature film with an openly pro- lesbian storyline. Under the National Socialist rule that followed the Weimar period, homosexuality and even mild forms of gender play were considered deviant, therefore outlawed and punished.

[ii] A mode of filmmaking characterised by the privileging of setting over narrative; *mise-en-scène* over editing; high production values and use of recognisable stars; the historical as a source of visual attraction and aural pleasure, rather than just atmospheric background; and the challenging of mainstream codes of gender and sexuality (Koepnick 2002: 55).

[iii] 'To-be-looked-at-ness', coined by Laura Mulvey, describes the feminine woman onscreen when set up as a spectacle and object of the 'male gaze', of which Mulvey suggests that there are two distinct modes: 'voyeuristic' and 'fetishistic'.

[iv] A portmanteau word describing a nostalgia for the former *Ost*deutschland/East Germany. Nostalgia is a sentimental longing for a past which is often viewed through rose-tinted spectacles. The end of both the Federal and Democratic Republics of Germany are not referenced in Färberböck's film, perhaps because it is predominantly set in war-torn Berlin, a time before the division of the city into occupation zones, or possibly in order to heighten the sense that Lilly was utterly miserable after Felice is taken from her and would, therefore, not be nostalgic and look back fondly at any post-war period.

[v] Freud's claim that both homosexuality and melancholia are pathological conditions, where melancholia 'borrows some of its features from mourning and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object-choice to narcissism', that suffering from melancholia lies in the predominance of the narcissistic type of object choice (1957: 250), and that homosexuality is a prime form of narcissism (1957: 88), means it would be overly simplistic, not to mention homophobic, to conclude that Lilly's lesbian love makes a traditional melancholic reading easier.

[vi] Well-known examples include *All About Eve* (Mankiewicz 1950), *Desperately Seeking Susan* (Seidelman 1985) and *Single White Female* (Schroeder 1992).

[vii] 'Passing' means to be mistaken for a member of a dominant group or read as a societal norm, such as a feminine lesbian being mistaken for a heterosexual woman due to the fact her gender display and biological sex are aligned.

[viii] This is especially interesting in view of the intertextuality and star discourse surrounding actress Julia Koehler (Lilly) and her roles in films like *Nirgendwo in Afrika/ Nowhere in Africa* (Link 2001) and *Der Untergang/ Downfall* (Hirschbiegel 2004).